# Westminster launches new skills strategy to tackle job access barriers amid forecast growth



Westminster is poised for significant economic growth, with up to 48,000 new jobs projected to emerge by 2035. However, a new report commissioned by Westminster Labour Councillors and the Westminster Education, Employment and Skills Board (EESB) reveals that many local residents still confront considerable barriers to employment. Challenges such as low qualifications, a shortage of apprenticeships, and limited access to affordable childcare continue to hinder inclusion in the city's expanding economy. Despite Westminster being one of the UK’s economic powerhouses, home to over 54,000 businesses and more than 755,000 jobs, prosperity has yet to reach all communities equally. Areas like North Paddington experience pronounced unemployment and skills gaps, especially in growth sectors including hospitality, construction, the creative industries, and professional services. The report offers a blueprint for addressing these inequalities, which will feed into a comprehensive Skills Strategy set to launch later this year as part of the Labour-led council’s Fairer Economy Plan.

Central to the council’s approach is ensuring that opportunities in the modern economy are accessible to all residents, whether they are young people beginning their careers, parents returning to work, or individuals seeking to retrain. The Skills Strategy aims to equip local people with the skills necessary for emerging jobs and to ensure local employers can source talent from within Westminster. The report identifies four priority growth sectors: professional services, life sciences, construction, and creative industries, with hospitality recognised as a vital entry-level sector. It highlights that over 26,000 residents have low or no qualifications, and more than 7,000 are out of work but would consider employment if adequate support were available. Roles requiring Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications—technician and degree-level positions—are projected to experience the fastest growth, underscoring the need for targeted training and education pathways.

Efforts to close the skills gap will include creating a standardised skills framework to align training with employer needs and enhancing targeted support for economically inactive residents and underrepresented groups. Apprenticeships and bootcamp-style training programmes, especially aimed at young people under 25, are a core element of this strategy. This focus aligns with wider national concerns, particularly in the construction sector, which faces a severe skills shortage with over 140,000 vacancies threatening the delivery of critical housing and infrastructure projects. The UK government’s ambitious target to build over one million new homes by the mid-2030s is at risk, exacerbated by an ageing workforce and a reduction in EU workers due to Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. Skills training and diversity initiatives, including increasing representation of women and ethnic minorities in construction, are seen as vital steps to address this shortfall.

Westminster is proactively strengthening its employment initiatives through collaboration between the Westminster Employment Service, Adult Education Service, and external partners. These efforts include courses in digital skills, accounting, and creative crafts, alongside youth-focused employability and construction safety programmes designed to prepare young people for apprenticeships and job opportunities. The borough’s cultural and entrepreneurial vitality is further supported by initiatives such as the North Paddington Creates grants programme and the Church Street Triangle Enterprise Space, offering affordable workspaces and fostering community enterprise. Dedicated business support targets early-stage entrepreneurs, female founders, and disabled-owned businesses, alongside consultancy to scale-up ventures in key sectors. Collectively, these measures seek to position Westminster as a hub of fair and inclusive economic growth, ensuring that the benefits of the anticipated job expansion are widely shared across all communities.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.westminsterlabour.org.uk/issues/economy-and-digital/2025/06/22/new-council-skills-report-sets-the-path-for-a-fairer-economy-in-westminster/), [[4]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/new-report-highlights-how-close-skills-gap-westminster-0/education-employment-and-skills-board)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.westminsterlabour.org.uk/issues/economy-and-digital/2025/06/22/new-council-skills-report-sets-the-path-for-a-fairer-economy-in-westminster/), [[2]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/education-employment-and-skills-board/westminster-skills-evidence-base-report), [[3]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/new-report-highlights-how-close-skills-gap-westminster), [[4]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/new-report-highlights-how-close-skills-gap-westminster-0/education-employment-and-skills-board)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.placesforpeople.co.uk/pfp-thrive/insights-tools/the-uk-construction-skills-shortage/), [[6]](https://constructionwave.co.uk/2025/05/20/industry-implored-to-invest-in-apprenticeships-and-skills-training-to-solve-the-workforce-crisis/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/delivering-our-plan-build-fairer-westminster/delivering-fairer-economy), [[1]](https://www.westminsterlabour.org.uk/issues/economy-and-digital/2025/06/22/new-council-skills-report-sets-the-path-for-a-fairer-economy-in-westminster/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.westminsterlabour.org.uk/issues/economy-and-digital/2025/06/22/new-council-skills-report-sets-the-path-for-a-fairer-economy-in-westminster/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/education-employment-and-skills-board/westminster-skills-evidence-base-report> - The Westminster Skills Evidence Base report, commissioned by the Education, Employment and Skills Board (EESB) and developed by Volterra Partners, provides an in-depth analysis of local skills needs and opportunities. It identifies four priority growth sectors in Westminster: professional services, life sciences, construction, and the creative industries. Hospitality is also recognised as a key entry-level sector offering job opportunities to many residents. The report highlights that over 26,000 local people have low or no qualifications, and more than 7,000 residents are currently out of work but would like to work if the right support was in place. It also forecasts that up to 48,000 new jobs are expected in Westminster by 2035, with roles at Level 3 and 4 (technician and degree-level) forecast to grow the fastest. The report recommends creating a standardised skills framework to ensure training matches employers’ needs, providing targeted support for economically inactive residents and underrepresented groups, and promoting apprenticeships and bootcamps in growth sectors, especially for young people under 25. The findings will shape the Council’s full Skills Strategy, which is due to be published later this year.
3. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/new-report-highlights-how-close-skills-gap-westminster> - A new report highlights skills gaps, growth sectors, and plans to help residents access 48,000 new jobs by 2035. The Westminster Skills Evidence Base, commissioned by the Westminster Education, Employment & Skills Board (EESB) and developed by Volterra Partners, provides an in-depth analysis of local skills needs and opportunities. It identifies four priority growth sectors in Westminster: professional services, life sciences, construction, and the creative industries. Hospitality is also recognised as a key entry-level sector offering job opportunities to many residents. The report highlights that over 26,000 local people have low or no qualifications, and more than 7,000 residents are currently out of work but would like to work if the right support was in place. It also forecasts that up to 48,000 new jobs are expected in Westminster by 2035, with roles at Level 3 and 4 (technician and degree-level) forecast to grow the fastest. The report recommends creating a standardised skills framework to ensure training matches employers’ needs, providing targeted support for economically inactive residents and underrepresented groups, and promoting apprenticeships and bootcamps in growth sectors, especially for young people under 25. The findings will shape the Council’s full Skills Strategy, which is due to be published later this year.
4. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/new-report-highlights-how-close-skills-gap-westminster-0/education-employment-and-skills-board> - The Education, Employment and Skills Board (EESB) is an initiative aimed at bridging the gap between skills and work, helping residents achieve their potential and supporting employers to recruit local talent. The Westminster Skills Evidence Base, commissioned by the EESB and developed by Volterra Partners, provides an in-depth analysis of local skills needs and opportunities. It identifies four priority growth sectors in Westminster: professional services, life sciences, construction, and the creative industries. Hospitality is also recognised as a key entry-level sector offering job opportunities to many residents. The report highlights that over 26,000 local people have low or no qualifications, and more than 7,000 residents are currently out of work but would like to work if the right support was in place.
5. <https://www.placesforpeople.co.uk/pfp-thrive/insights-tools/the-uk-construction-skills-shortage/> - The UK construction industry is facing a severe skills shortage, with over 140,000 job vacancies stalling essential housing and infrastructure projects. Despite skilled trades such as bricklaying, plumbing, and roofing comprising 10% of England’s workforce, demand far exceeds supply. By 2035, over one-third of construction workers will retire, worsening the crisis. This shortfall puts the UK government’s ambitious 1.3 million new homes target at serious risk. The report, Construction and Building Trades: The Skills Horizon, examines the current challenges facing the sector and solutions, such as those implemented by PfP Thrive, to address skills shortages and futureproof the industry. Investment in apprenticeships and skills training is crucial for solving the workforce crisis. The report also highlights the need for diversity and inclusion in the construction workforce, as women represent just 0.9% of housebuilders and 4% of skilled trades, and ethnic minorities make up only 6% of the workforce. The impact of Brexit and Covid-19 on the construction sector has worsened the skills shortage, with a significant reduction in the number of EU construction workers in London and a decline in workforce training. Regional disparities in construction skills and employment are also evident, with 30% of UK construction firms concentrated in London and the South East, while Wales and the North East hold just 4% and 3% of construction jobs, respectively. Bridging the UK skills gap requires investment in apprenticeships and training, diversity and inclusion efforts, and digitalisation and AI adoption to drive efficiency and reduce costs.
6. <https://constructionwave.co.uk/2025/05/20/industry-implored-to-invest-in-apprenticeships-and-skills-training-to-solve-the-workforce-crisis/> - The UK construction industry is facing a severe skills shortage, with over 140,000 job vacancies stalling essential housing and infrastructure projects. Despite skilled trades such as bricklaying, plumbing, and roofing comprising 10% of England’s workforce, demand far exceeds supply. By 2035, over one-third of construction workers will retire, worsening the crisis. This shortfall puts the UK government’s ambitious 1.5 million new homes target at risk. The report, Construction and Building Trades: The Skills Horizon, examines the current challenges facing the sector and solutions, such as those implemented by PfP Thrive, to address skills shortages and futureproof the industry. Investment in apprenticeships and skills training is crucial for solving the workforce crisis. The report also highlights the need for diversity and inclusion in the construction workforce, as women represent just 0.9% of housebuilders and 4% of skilled trades, and ethnic minorities make up only 6% of the workforce. The impact of Brexit and Covid-19 on the construction sector has worsened the skills shortage, with a significant reduction in the number of EU construction workers in London and a decline in workforce training. Regional disparities in construction skills and employment are also evident, with 30% of UK construction firms concentrated in London and the South East, while Wales and the North East hold just 4% and 3% of construction jobs, respectively. Bridging the UK skills gap requires investment in apprenticeships and training, diversity and inclusion efforts, and digitalisation and AI adoption to drive efficiency and reduce costs.
7. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/delivering-our-plan-build-fairer-westminster/delivering-fairer-economy> - The Westminster Employment Service has strengthened its employment initiatives, collaborating with Westminster Adult Education Service and external partners to provide digital skills, accounting, and creative crafts courses. Youth-focused programmes, including employability training and construction safety courses, are empowering young people to access job opportunities and apprenticeships. Creative industries are thriving with the launch of North Paddington Creates, a grants programme supporting arts and cultural activities to boost local pride and attract visitors. Additionally, the Church Street Triangle Enterprise Space now offers affordable workspaces and community amenities, fostering entrepreneurship. New business support programmes target early-stage entrepreneurs, female founders, and disabled-owned businesses, alongside tailored consultancy for scale-ups, driving innovation and resilience in key sectors. These initiatives collectively position Westminster as a hub for equitable economic growth.